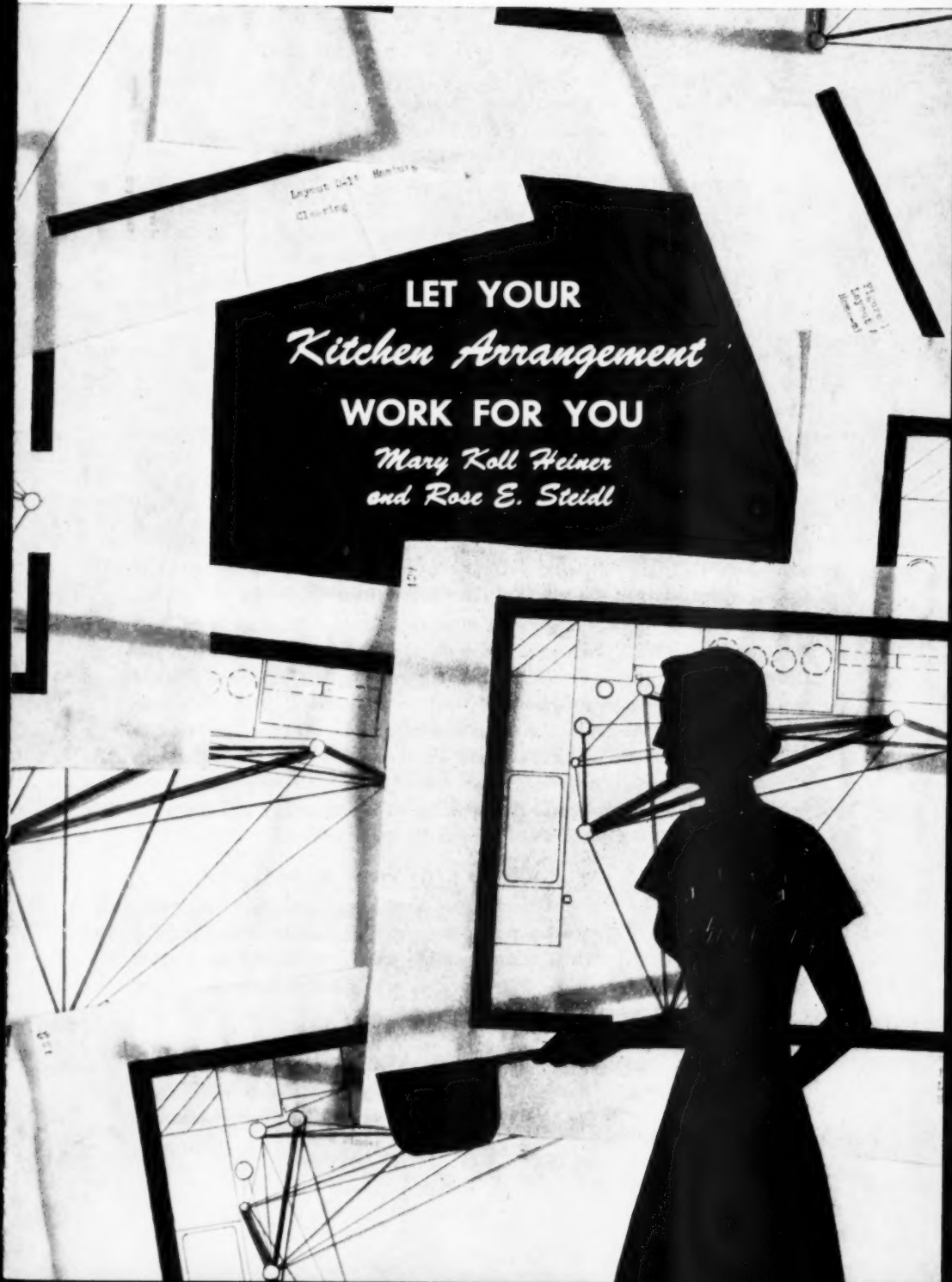


LET YOUR  
*Kitchen Arrangement*  
WORK FOR YOU

*Mary Koll Heiner  
and Rose E. Steidl*



## Let Your Kitchen Arrangement Work for You

MARY KOLL HEINER AND ROSE E. STEIDL

**W**HERE do you do most of your work in your home? Many homemakers would say, "At the kitchen sink." Others would say, "Over the cook stove"; and they could both be right.

Research done at your State College shows that these are the two spots that make the highest demand upon the homemaker when she is in the kitchen.

### How can you arrange your kitchen to make your work easier?

What we found out will be of help to you. But since each family has different ways of doing things, you and your family will have to decide: (1) which arrangements you would like (2) which your present kitchen will permit you to use.

### Consider the relation of the kitchen to other parts of the house

As you know, there are constant interruptions that take you from your work in the kitchen. You realize how important it is to get easily to the front door or to the back. Many trips are made to the telephone. When there is sickness you want to reach the sick room quickly. The same is true when there are small children. A good view of the play area from the kitchen and a quick way to reach it are essential. Grocery supplies need to be brought into the kitchen, trash taken out. Old houses were built with many doors opening directly into the kitchen. But today we can arrange the home without so many doors that cause wasteful walking in the kitchen.

### What are the things your family want to do most in the kitchen?

Homemakers have quite different ideas about their kitchens. Fortunately we are getting away from a room just large enough for kitchen activities—cooking and washing dishes. Many families want enough additional space for an attractive eating spot. Many young people like to entertain in the kitchen. A growing number of families want space for other activities in the kitchen.

Do you want your kitchen to be a "living" kitchen—a room that is the shared activity center of the home? If you have young children they have a deep need to be where you are. Is there room for them without annoyance?

Would your teen-agers enjoy a kitchen large enough for entertaining their friends as they pop corn or make fudge? In such a kitchen the youngsters can clean up after their candy-making while the fun goes on. Would you like to have an easy chair in the kitchen? An easy chair would accommodate a visitor or Dad when he first comes in and wants to be with you as you work, or you when you want to relax. Have you a spot where you would like to figure expenses or to plan your meals, your garden, or the marketing? Where would you like to sew or mend, and wash, dry, or iron clothes without carrying them up and down stairs unnecessarily? Does the family have hobbies for which it needs space that will not interfere with you or other members? Is space needed to arrange flowers? Perhaps a family kitchen is the answer to some of these questions. A look into the future as well as at the present often helps you to make decisions and to plan a kitchen which will really fit your family, as they grow up, and you, as you grow older.

#### **Before you remodel or build**

As you plan your kitchen, you will begin to realize what space you want for the kitchen equipment only, and then for additional activities as well. Doors break up useful wall space in the kitchen. Therefore in old houses with many doors and windows, compromises often must be made. As you try to rearrange your equipment you may find that you have no free wall space for the changes you most want to make. It is often possible to close off a door or two to make a better kitchen. Some homemakers have found that they can place some of their kitchen equipment in an "island" or peninsular arrangement instead of having it scattered about the walls of a large room. Sometimes the sink forms the island, sometimes the range. An arrangement of this sort has been especially successful when there are many doors in the room. Such an arrangement also can bring the equipment closer together and can reduce needless long trips. And this method helps you to separate the work area from traffic interference.

It is sensible to ask for reliable advice on changes you are thinking about. Whenever walls are to be moved, or the location of major equipment changed, the structure of the house needs to be considered. Important changes such as these call for an expert!

You can avoid later grief, too, if you try out the possible new arrangement of equipment before you make a final decision. You can try out arrangements yourself by setting up a mock kitchen with chairs or table or by spreading newspapers to represent location of equipment in the new plan. Go through the motions of preparing a meal and the cleaning-up after to see if the new plan will be as easy to work in as you think it might be. This type of trial almost requires another person to check the trips you make from one center to another. Only you can judge the ease of the arrangement.

## The Shape of Your Kitchen Arrangement

**T**HERE are several common shapes in which kitchen equipment is arranged. Each has advantages and disadvantages. Some are more important to one homemaker than to another. The only ones for which we give guides here is the L-shape. In this arrangement all equipment is placed along two adjoining walls. This leaves two walls free for other uses to which the family may wish to put them.

Some guides that will help your kitchen arrangement work for you are:

1. Try not to have doors between your pieces of kitchen equipment. This is possible in the L- and U-shaped arrangements.

Every time you have to dodge other persons as they walk through the kitchen, your work is more difficult and your temper may become shorter. Also, every time you have to go past a door to get from one piece of equipment to another, you walk five or six feet farther than if there were no door. The two and a half or three feet (the width of the door) may not seem like very much, but, doubled, this distance begins to add up considerably during the work for just one meal. This may be one reason for tiredness and temper at the end of a meal. For a woman with a heart difficulty or with arthritis it may be something to consider over the years she may use her kitchen.

2. Place some of the equipment at a right angle ( $\perp$ ) to the other.

Equipment so placed shortens the walking distance between your units. It may make reaching from unit to unit easier. With this arrangement, often, turning your head as you stand at the sink is all you need to do to check the kettle on the cook stove.

Both the L- and the U-shaped arrangements have this advantage. The U-shaped kitchen would offer a double advantage because it has two corners; disadvantages must be considered, however, such as interference when more than one worker or children are in the work space at the same time.

3. Allow enough floor space for workers to walk around one another easily.

Working in a crowded kitchen is difficult. A happier relation with another worker is possible when you don't have to shift positions frequently to make room for him or her.

Space for a second worker is more easily provided in an L-kitchen than in a U-kitchen; the single corner and two sides of an L-arrangement are less restricting than the two corners and three sides of a U-arrangement. You can make it easier for two or three to work in a U-kitchen if you make the kitchen wide enough for the workers to move about easily.

### Let Your Storage Work for You

**Y**OUR equipment arrangement can work very much better if you also let your storage work for you. Earlier research<sup>1</sup> has shown that you can get rid of waste work if you store supplies and articles within your own easy and comfortable reach. Have your shelves built only wide enough to let you store supplies one row deep. In this way, you can see them quickly and you can reach them easily.

Another way of putting storage to work is to store often used packaged or canned foods where you first want to use them. At the same place store the utensils you use with these foods when you start to prepare the foods. This kind of storage arrangement will save you a lot of unnecessary walking and needless searching for the item that you want. With this system all you need to do is to stop and ask yourself, "Where do I use it first?" and there it will be. If you follow this plan you will find too that it is easier for the children to help with the work.

### The Arrangement of the Kitchen Equipment

**A** NUMBER of arrangements of kitchen equipment were tested to learn just which ones would help to get rid of unnecessary walking and other waste work. Of course, storage of supplies and articles was at the place of first use. If you wish to make the most of the suggestions we offer in this bulletin, you will need to store your things at the place of first use. You will be surprised at how quickly and easily you can work when you have everything conveniently located.

In each kitchen we tested, we had five centers—the sink, the range, the mixing center, the refrigerator, and the china center. When we refer to a "center," we mean not only the unit itself, such as the range, but also the storage and counter space needed around the unit to make it an easy working place. We also had an eating area in our plans.

To test the kitchen arrangements, we had a worker prepare in each kitchen typical evening meals for a family of four living in the city on a moderate income. We kept a careful record of the centers she had to use and what she did at each. We studied the number of trips she made between all of the centers to learn which ones seemed most important in the kitchen and to each other.

Our findings will be given in the sections that follow. Only you can judge if our suggestions can help improve your kitchen arrangement.

<sup>1</sup>*Kitchen Cupboards That Simplify Storage*, by Mary Koll Heiner and Helen E. McCullough. Cornell Extension Bulletin 703. Reprinted July, 1951.

To summarize the ways in which we let our arrangements work for us:

1. We always stored supplies and the utensils needed with them at the place where we would use them first.
2. We had shelves that were within easy reach for the worker.
3. We placed supplies on shelves so that we could see the supplies quickly and grasp them easily.
4. We insisted upon some counter space at each work center and at both sides of the sink. We placed the refrigerator and standing floor cupboards so that the door handle was nearest the counter. This arrangement made it convenient to stack or hold supplies when we opened the door. This is also an important item when you buy your refrigerator. Be sure to consider where you can place it so that the door handle is next to your work counter. If the door hinge is next to your counter, you will have six feet of unnecessary walking just as you would with a doorway between your pieces of equipment.

#### **The sink center**

The most important center in the kitchen was the sink center. More trips were made to and from this center than from any other place in the kitchen. And the worker spent the most time at the sink center.

In our test kitchens, counter space at least 18 inches long was always allowed on the left side of the sink bowl. On the right side, 36 inches of counter was needed for stacking the used dishes and pans. If you wash dishes from the right to the left as our right-handed worker did, your work will be much easier if you, too, have at least this amount of counter space on each side of the sink bowl. We stored the pans and supplies we used first at the sink in three places: (1) under the 36-inch counter (2) in the space under the sink and (3) on an open panel above the counter.

#### **The range center**

The second most important center in the kitchen was the range center. It was always necessary to make trips to the range to check on the progress of the food that was cooking. We were fortunate to have a range model with a long counter in front of the four burners; this provided almost enough space for serving the hot food. An 18-inch counter beside the range was used when we needed more space, for example, when we served desserts.

All skillets, a griddle, pan covers, one saucepan for canned vegetables, supplies such as macaroni or tea used first with boiling water, and forks or spoons to test foods were stored at the range. This first-use storage saved the worker many trips across the kitchen.

#### **The mixing center**

The mixing center ranked third in importance in our kitchens. We not only mixed desserts, but also prepared salads here and floured our meat; in



fact, we did all mixing and blending operations here. To make the work easier, all the supplies and all the equipment needed for the mixing and blending and baking operations were kept at this center within the worker's easy direct reach. This counter was 36 inches long so that the worker would have enough space to spread out her equipment as she worked.

### **The refrigerator and china centers**

Among the centers in our kitchens these two centers ranked fourth in frequency of use. The door handles of both the refrigerator and the china cabinet were next to a counter. This arrangement made it easy for the worker to put down her tray and load it with china and glasses or to pour the cream and milk from the bottles to the pitchers, and the reverse after the meals.

### **The eating area**

As many trips were made to the eating area as were made to the refrigerator or china centers. If you have more than one eating area, you will want to decide which one you use the most—the one in the kitchen or in the dining room. Then you will be able to plan a kitchen arrangement that makes it easier for you to go between the kitchen centers and the eating area.

### **Where should you put each center ?**

The greatest number of trips from one center to another was made between the sink and the range centers. Since these two centers ranked first and second in over-all use, it is very important to try to have them close together.

If you can place the sink and the range centers side by side with counter space between, or at right angles to one another, you probably will be able to check on foods cooking at the range just by turning your head and without walking from the sink. Of course, the size and shape of your kitchen may not permit either of these locations, or you may have a great number of doors or windows so that you may have to place the sink and the range centers across from one another. If so, you would be wise to check to see whether you prefer them directly across from one another or in a staggered position. For some persons, a sudden turn causes dizziness. If this is one of your difficulties, try to avoid placing these two much-used pieces directly opposite each other.

Where should you place the mixing center? This depends upon you and how you like to work. Some women like to put things to soak as soon as they've used them. This makes them easier to wash later. Some women don't mind sticky dishes. They want to get things in the oven quickly. In our study, we found that more trips were made between the mixing center and the sink than between the mixing center and the range, or between the mixing center and the refrigerator. If you do a great deal of baking, it is possible that you would find it better to have the mixing center closer to the range

center than to the sink center. Watch yourself as you work and think about the meals that you serve; these considerations will help you to decide.

We also found that the sink, the range, and the mix centers were of equal importance to the refrigerator. It is best to place the sink and its counters first, then the range and mix centers where you most want them in relation to the sink. And lastly consider the location of the refrigerator center as it is less important than the other three.

The setting of the table for eating, and the washing and cleaning-up after meals are important in deciding where you store your china in the kitchen. If it is at all possible, place the china center (where all the items needed to set the table are stored) close to both your most frequent eating area and the sink. In this way, you reduce needless walking when you set the table and when you store the clean tableware. If you are in the habit, as you wash dishes, of placing your clean tableware on the left side of the sink, your china center will be convenient if it is also placed on the left side of the sink. This arrangement not only reduces needless walking, but may reduce needless annoyance.

What should you place near the eating area? We have already mentioned its relation to the china center. We found besides that there were many trips from both the range and sink centers to the eating area; therefore these should be taken into consideration. You may also make quite a few trips between your refrigerator center and the eating area, especially if your family drinks a great deal of milk or if you serve many refrigerator desserts or use ice cubes frequently or store many left-overs. In this case, you may want to place your refrigerator near the eating area.

### In Brief

The suggestions included in this bulletin should be considered as guides, not as rules for arranging kitchen equipment. Each family has certain values and goals and faces certain circumstances that will indicate which of the guides are most suitable for it. Thoughtful consideration, then, of these guides will help you develop a kitchen arrangement that will reduce needless work for you; hence an arrangement that works for you and adds to the convenience and comfort and general enjoyment of the room by your family.

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